A New Barrie Play

LONDON, Aug. 30.—There is another Barrie treat in store for American playgoers. It will come when Sir James Barrie's newest dramatic work, which is called "A Well Remembered Voice," is produced on the other side of the Atlantic. This is not a full sized play, but a one-act piece, one of three by the author of "The Little Minister" which were done for the first time at a London war charity matinee the other day. It is, however, a real dramatic gem, which will appeal to every one, and most of all to fathers and mothers who have lost sons in the war, to whom it will bring a message of inspiration and good cheer. London's dramatic critics are unanimous in declaring it to be the best thing that Barrie has done since the war began, not even excepting "Dear Brutus," the fantastic comedy which has passed its 300th performance at Wyndham's, and "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals," another war-time playlet, which has been produced in the United States.

Barrie's own description of his newest little piece is "a mystery." In spite of this there is none of the author's characteristic elusiveness in its composition. It neither tantalizes nor provokes. It tells a straightforward story straightforwardly, and it gripped the blasé matinee audience who witnessed it a few afternoons ago.

"The Well Remembered Voice" in this playlet is that of an artist's soldier son, speaking to him out of the Great Beyond. The artist, Mr. Don, was played by Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertsonson. The "voice" which he and the audience heard was that of Gerald du Maurier, who, by the way, joined the army himself a few days after the production of the new piece. The artist in the play listened to his son's voice and was moved by it to deep emotion, relieved by the laughter which Barrie more than perhaps any other dramatist of our day has the faculty of blending artistically with tears.

There had been a spiritualistic seance in Mr. Don's studio. Mrs. Don had been trying, vainly, to communicate with her boy. Mr. Don, disbelieving, sat apart from the others. They thought he was callous, and they rated him for it. Really, his sorrow was too deep for words.

The seance over, he was left alone—to grapple with his grief. It was then that his dead boy's voice came out to him from the other side of the veil—quietly, caressingly and (who but Barrie could have achieved this thing?) colloquially, humorously, laughingly, chidingly—speaking to him from the empty armchair opposite in the terms and tones of a comfortable after-dinner chat.

The wonder of that duologue, spoken by actors of such quality as Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson and Mr. Gerald du Maurier, remains a wonderful memory.

"I never thought I should be killed," said the voice. "What a little thing it is!" Then, almost in the same breath: "Has the bathroom tap been mended yet? . . . Who's the captain of the boats?" Then, soothingly, for the father's agitation was wellnigh unbearable: "Get your pipe, father! Light it!"

Somebody whom the boy knew in this life had been awarded the K. C. M. G. He was a dictatorial fellow, and the letters as applied to him (said the voice) meant: "Kindly Call Me God!" The father momentarily forgot his sorrow and laughed aloud—as the voice intended that he should.

Barrie has often written with uncanny insight of the intricacies of maternal love. Here he writes as revealingly of a father's strong affection. "Mother's a darling," said the voice, "but she doesn't mean things as you do."

Again the voice grew gentle. It spoke of another loved one—of the golden girl. "I kissed her under the lilac tree," it said. Afterward in a later scene the girl herself exclaimed in a moment of rapturous remembrance: "I seem to scent the lilacs—he kissed me under the lilac tree."

"Keep bright, father," said the voice at parting. "I shall get a good mark for it. Remember, father, it's not goodby."

So the curtain fell on this poem of a play—the father relighting his pipe, gripping it in his teeth, and resolving to "keep bright."

Of course, a play as fine as this little piece will soon be given a regular production. Every father bereaved by the war should see it, and, like the artist Don, be encouraged thereby to "keep bright." That is the war message of Sir James Barrie, who himself has been sadly bereaved by the war, to his fellow men. The other two playlets from the Scottish dramatist's pen which were presented in the same bill were only less enjoyable than "A Well Remembered Voice." One of them, "La Politesse: An International Affair," is a light-hearted trifle showing how two escaped cockney soldiers sought refuge in a French house on the owner's wedding night, and, on discovering the circumstances, politely preferred to sleep in the pigsty. The third item in this notable Barrie bill, "The Origin of Harlequin," proved to be a little ballet, with charming music by Herman Finck, who did the score of "'Round the Map."

Barrie, by the way, must have been unusually industrious of late, for yet another little war play of his fashioning is announced as part of the contents of a new periodical whose list of contributors is calculated to make every magazine editor in the world turn green with envy. This periodical is an official one, a quarterly, published by the British Ministry of Pensions, and hitherto named "Recalled to Life," for the reason that it is devoted to the problems and welfare of the disabled soldier. Up to now it has been edited by Lord Charnwood, who is well known to Americans by reason of his "Life of Abraham Lincoln," but in its altered form it will be called "Reveille" and will be under the editorship of John Galsworthy.

To return to Sir James Barrie. He has consented at last to publish his famous plays in volume form, a boon for which his admirers on both sides of the water have been praying for many years, and we shall soon be able to add "What Every Woman Knows," "The Admirable Crichton," "Quality Street" and all the rest to our libraries. The first mentioned play has already been issued, and the first line in the "Stage Directions for the First Act" reminds one of a story. It is quite an old story, so old that many readers may not have heard it.

The line is this: "James Wylie is about to make a move on the dambrod, and in the little Scotch room there is an awful silence, befitting the occasion." Now, dambrod is good Scots for draught-board, and the term is used as we use "check" for a pattern that is like the design of a chessboard. Thus, a dambrod pattern means a pattern of squares.

Well, an old Scottish lady was on a visit to London, and she was doing a little shopping. She wanted some tablecloths.

"A dambrod pattern," she explained.

The shopman raised his eyebrows slightly, but began to show his customer tablecloths.

"Nay, nay," she said. "I told ye I wanted a dambrod pattern."

She went on saying this, and became impatient and a little vehement. At last the shopman said in a shocked voice:

"I beg your pardon, madam, but this is the broadest pattern we have in stock."

(Copyright, Marshal Syndicate.)

JOSEPH ROSENBLATT

At the Hippodrome To-day

Who's Who in Current Plays

It is no exaggeration to say that there have never been more inquiries made as to just who a person is than have been made the last few days regarding Margaret Lawrence, who gives so charming a portrayal of the wife in Roi Cooper Megrue's new comedy, "Tea for Three," at Maxine Elliott's Theatre. Miss Lawrence scored so emphatic a personal hit in the play that the interest and polite curiosity are not to be wondered at.

As a matter of fact, while theatregoers were saying: "Ah, at last a new face!" she is not a newcomer to Broadway at all. She has just been away for a while—that is all.

Theatregoers, had they only stopped to think, would have had no trouble in recalling that seven years ago they were almost, if not quite, as enthusiastic over the performance of a young lady by the name of Margaret Lawrence, playing the leading role in "Over Night," a comedy by Philip Hawthorne. Then, if they had put two and two together, they would have instantly identified their present-day favorite with the favorite of former seasons.

Miss Lawrence resigned from her part in "Over Night" while the play was enjoying a long and extremely successful engagement at Chicago. She came East and was married to Orson D. Munn, then one of the editors of "The Scientific American" and at present lieutenant commander in the United States navy.

Miss Ada Meade, who is playing one of the leading rôles in Klaw & Erlanger's new musical comedy, "The Girl Behind the Gun," at the New Amsterdam Theatre, is from Kentucky. Her birthplace was Lexington, famous for its beautiful women and its fast horses, and the speed with which Miss Meade arrived at the top of her profession would do credit to one of those same horses.

Miss Meade admits that she got stagestruck when she was still in short frocks, and long before she was out of her teens she was a local celebrity as an amateur actress. At last, after much pleading, she got her mother's consent to come to New York and go on the regular stage. Her good looks, her voice and her eagerness soon obtained a hearing for her, and she was given a small part in a road company. The next season she went to Texas as the head of her own musical stock company, and it was the experience that she got then that has pushed her forward so rapidly.

After pausing a year to study in Paris she returned to New York and was given the leading part in "Katinka." Last season the Charles Frohman company engaged her to play one of the leading parts in "Rambler Rose," in which it was starring Julia Sanderson and Joseph Cawthorne. And this season, in "The Girl Behind the Gun," Miss Meade impersonates a French actress who adopts a soldier at the front as her godson.

Frank Westerton, of "Three Faces East," was in his dressing room at the Cohan & Harris Theatre telling his favorite tale, "The Chance I Missed to Kill the Kaiser." "On the fateful day," he relates, "our King and Queen, with the Kaiser as their guest, were inspecting the regiment. I stood at attention not three feet from the Kaiser, looking him straight in the eye, my bayonet fixed. If I had known then what I know now, believe me, that bayonet would have fixed him!"

"That's nothing to the chance I missed," shouted in Frank Sheridan, the Secret Service head of "Three Faces East," from the next dressing room. "Man, I could have exterminated the Kaiser and the Crown Prince at one sitting. It was in my student days, when I dreamed of being an opera star and called myself a 'lyric tenor.' The royal family attended one of Schumann-Heink's performances of 'Carmen' and I was singing super off-stage. Now, if I'd been on the stage and sung just one lyric solo for their majesties, believe me, it would have fixed the whole Hohenzollern family."

Time Changes of Theatres

At 8:00—Forty-fourth Street, Lexington.
At 8:10—Knickerbocker.
At 8:15—Broadhurst, Casino, Century, Central (Sunday concert), Harris, Liberty, Shubert, Shubert-Riviera, Winter Garden, New Amsterdam.
At 8:20—Criterion, Loew's Seventh Avenue, Lyceum.
At 8:25—Geo. M. Cohan's.
At 8:30—Astor, Comedy, Gaiety, Hudson, Lyric, Morosco, Plymouth, Standard.
At 8:40—Empire.
At 8:45—Belasco, Belmont, Booth, Central, Cohan & Harris, Thirty-ninth Street, Selwyn, Vanderbilt.
At 9:00—Bijou, Forty-eighth Street, Longacre, Maxine Elliott's, Playhouse, Punch and Judy, Republic.
At 11:30—Century Grove.